

# Pre-nistoric settlement uncovered

EDISON — Cheops may not have yet caused the great pyramid to rise at Gizeh during Egypt's IVth Dynasty when a band of pre-historic Indians encamped along the banks of the Bound Brook in Edison's Dismal Swamp.

Remnants of that settlement have just been uncovered by a team of archaeologists, who date the site as being between 3,000 and 5,000 years old.

"How significant is this site?" asked William Bohn, chairman of the Edison Planning Board, during a recent inspection tour of the area along with Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics.

"Extremely so," Bohn was told by Charles A. Bello of Research & Archaeological Management Inc. of Highland Park.

The firm was engaged by Edison Tyler Estates, which has plans to develop portions of the Dismal Swamp as a planned unit development (PUD), after it was reported at hearings on rezoning the property PUD that the site between Talmadge Road and Park Avenue contained "Indian artifacts."

According to Mike Seidner, an associate of Edison Tyler Estates, he took this to mean American Indians who roamed this area when it was being settled by the Dutch and English.

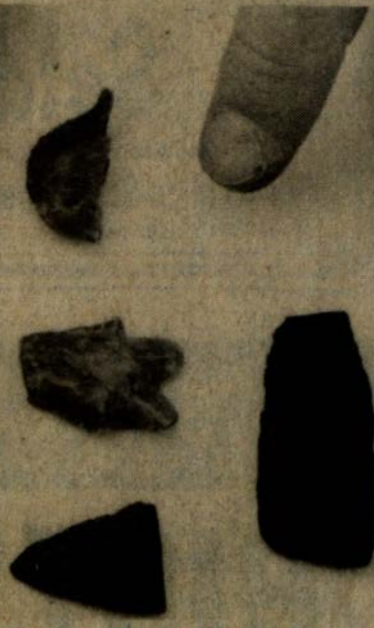
He was no little amazed to learn from Bello and his associate, Peter Primavera, that the Indians who left behind evidence of their life in the Dismal Swamp lived here before the dawn of written history at a time when the Bronze Age was just beginning in Europe.

Research & Archaeological Management was engaged by Edison Tyler Woods to first determine if the

reported site existed, what it contained and whether it was "significant."

After three months of work, the archaeologists determined that it was, indeed, significant.

Now Edison Tyler Woods is working with the archaeologists to determine what will be involved in financing a full-scale excavation of the site centered in the woods on elevated



Samples of pre-historic artifacts uncovered in Edison's Dismal Swamp during preliminary excavations by Research & Archaeological Management Inc. of Highland Park, which was engaged by future developer to determine historic significance of site.

ground just a few hundred feet from the brook.

Seidner said that a report on what will be involved is expected in a few weeks.

However, according to Bohn, the area of the settlement will be off limits to any development until all of the artifacts have been removed.

"They'll not be able to build on it until such times that the archaeologists say it's clean," said Bohn.

Bello reported that evidence of the aboriginal inhabitants first was uncovered on the surface and that excavations of up to between 10 and 12 inches produced such objects as argillite arrow heads or "projectile points."

## Discovery 'incredible'

During the tour what appeared to be a small piece of shale kicked up by one of the visitors was identified by Primavera as a fire-cracked stone.

Used to hold the heat in underground "ovens," it was other similar pieces of stone that provided the "tip off" to the existence and location of the Stone Age settlement, according to Primavera.

What makes the Dismal Swamp find so significant, according to Bello, is the fact that so much of the site has never been plowed up or destroyed.

Bello said it was "incredible" to find a settlement *in situ* just as these pre-historic Indians left it with no "accumulation of a later occupation to contaminate it."

The archaeologists described the Indians as nomadic "hunter-

gatherers" who did not engage in agriculture and "lived off the land." And while they did not establish permanent homes, they did stake out "territories."

"It was suitable place to live," said Bello of the Dismal Swamp because it provided "high dry ground" on which to set up camp and was close to water.

It also is their supposition that the encampment, tentatively estimated to occupy an area of 300'x300', was occupied only seasonally.

"Doing the digs" to completely mine the site will be "a long and tedious process," Bohn and Mayor Yelencsics were told.

And "it speaks well of the developers," said Primavera, that

the important historic find "is now available to the scientific community."

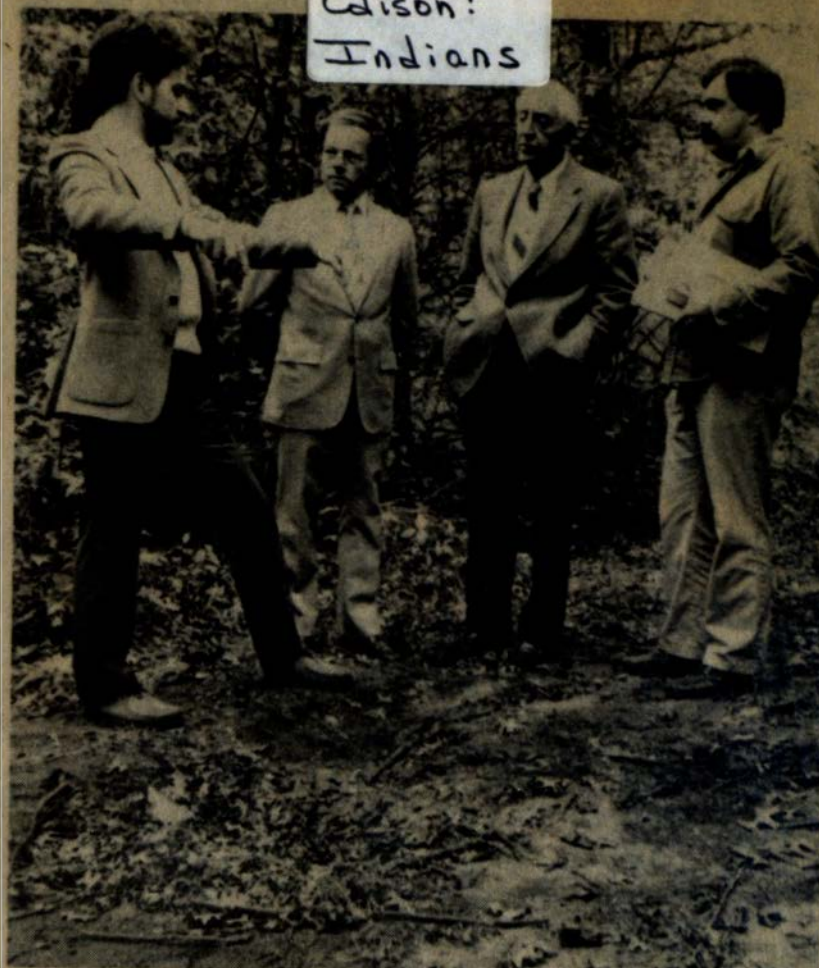
"It is a contribution to history," said Primavera, who pointed out that failure to excavate the site could result in the ultimate loss of all that it contains.

"This is a rare, rare opportunity to grab something to make a study of it," he said.

He added that the contents of the site do not have "a high dollar value."

"It's scientific value that's buried in there," he added.

According to Primavera, Research & Archaeological Management's main interest in the excavation will be the anthropological knowledge it provides — new information about man and his physical, mental, social



Archaeologists Peter Primavera (left) and Charles Bello (right) explain to Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics (center right) and William Bohn, chairman of Edison Planning Board, the historic significance of Stone Age Indian settlement found in Edison's Dismal Swamp.

and cultural development — rather than the antiquities themselves.

Primavera and Bello tentatively suggested that once studied, the con-

tents of the settlement could be made the property of the New Jersey State Museum and then returned to Edison for permanent exhibition.

Edison:  
Indians



# In 1683: The Liquor We Use Most Is Sider

By JOHN MOORE  
Home News Staff Writer

EDISON—"We will not encourage any to go there in expectation of gold or silver," said a publication circulated in Scotland in 1683 to entice emmigration to the East New Jersey Colony.

"This riches of this country consist in that which is most substantial and necessary for the use of man: plenty of corn and cattle, besides vines and fruits in abundance.

"All sorts of tradesmen may make a brave livelihood there, such as carpenters, rope-makers, smiths, taylors and shoe-makers," the publication said, continuing:

## Towns Already

"There are seven towns already: Shreutsbury, Milltown, Berghen, Newark, Elizabethtown, Woodbridge and Piscataway, which are well inhabited by a sober and industrious people."

There was no Colonial Edison as such, if only because the present day municipality was carved out of Piscataway and Woodbridge in 1870.

But the Piscataway to which the ancient "Brief Account of East New Jersey in American" referred is shown by equally old maps as firmly within the boundaries of modern Edison.

Its name varied! Initially, it was New Piscataqua, named after an older Piscataqua in New England; then shortened to Piscataway; and then lengthened again to Piscataway Town.

But the village of Piscataway also was part of the Township of Piscataway, which in those early days stretched south and west as far as Princeton and Hillsborough in Mercer and Somerset counties.

"There is excellent gunning for deer and turkeys, of which there is great plenty and easily shot," a Scot wrote home from his plantation four miles from Piscataway (presumably the village.)

"Wool is very cheap, and only work is dear," he said.

But just how "sober" the industrious settlers were may be a moot point.

"The air is healthful and the soil fruitful," the Scott wrote. "The liquor we use most is sider."

## Peaceful?

"The Indian natives are few, and are far from being formidable or injurious to the planters and the inhabitants," wrote the author of the "Brief Account. "They are really serviceable and advantageous . . . not only in the taking hunting and taking of deer . . . but in the killing and destroying of bears, wolves, foxes and other vermins."

But he neglected to report that the Lenni Lenape Indians living along the Raritan (first settled by white in the vicinity of colonial Woodbridge and Piscataway is about 1650) had taken up arms against the Dutch in the 1640s.

According to one historian, hostilities along the river broke out in 1641 when the "maddened savages," enraged by Dutch soldiers who had visited the Indians villages the previous year and had charged them with "a few petty thefts, retaliated by murdering the settlers and laying waste the plantations on Staten Island."

The war lasted several years, and finally negotiations for peace began. But while they were in progress, "an Indian, the son of a chief, was made drunk and then robbed by some Dutch traders. Furious . . . and blinded by intoxication, the savage took revenge by shooting down the first white man that fell in his way."

And there were headaches involved with being a colonist. For one thing, no one was ever sure who ruled the colony.

The East New Jersey Colony at first had been under the domination of the Dutch who had founded the New Netherlands in the 1620s. But English warships sailed into New Amsterdam harbor in 1664 conquering the New Netherlands, and East New Jersey fell under the rule of England.

In this same year, the Indians granted land along the Raritan to the whites, and the settlement of Piscataway and Wood-

bridge (and Edison) got under way in earnest.

But war broke out between England and Holland in 1673, and the Dutch reconquered New York and New Jersey in July that year.

The Piscatawaytown town fathers joined the Woodbridge officials in a trip to New Amsterdam where on August 6, 1674 they formally surrendered to the reinstated Dutch.

## To English Again

But the Dutch control was short-lived. The war in Europe over New Netherland reverted to the English in February 1674.

In 1677, the English proprietors bought up a fairly vast tract of land still owned by the Lenape, pronounced *Lenape*, between the Woodbridge and Piscataway town villages.

The price? "One hundred fathoms of white wampum, six match-shots, five blankets, three guns, six shirts, twenty barrs of lead, twenty double barrels of powder, one pipe of rum, and two half fathoms of beaver and six kettles."

But if peace had been restored between the Indians and the whites, there was friction between the settlers at Piscatawaytown and Woodbridge.

The boundary between the two towns had been marked on the ground in the 1669, the Piscataway men claimed the line had been drawn to favor Woodbridge, set about defacing the trees to obliterate the markers.

But Colonial Edison was a young man. The first County Court was conducted on Dis-

catawaytown in June 1683, and for the next 16 years was held alternately in here, Woodbridge, and Amboy.

Just how organized the proceedings actually were is not known. But in 1694 at Woodbridge, Judge James Darms and Capt. John Rickett, an assistant judge, were indicted for rancor.

## Taxen Then, Too

In 1685 a road "up Raritan" was carved out to the west to the north and west of Piscataway Town, connecting the village with New Marlborough, Brook and ultimately Lambertville.

Piscataway Town had been built along the road leading from Elizabethtown (where it connected with New York, Woodbridge, Piscataway, Princeton, Trenton and eventually Philadelphia).

This road branched south to the west of Piscataway, eventually reaching Burlington. The land it traversed was virtually all state land. In 1695, the innkeepers of Elizabethtown, Woodbridge and Piscataway Town were asked to repair it.

George Locke, the Piscataway innholder, was appointed to make the repairs.

Piscataway Town was nearly 30 years old when it was coming of age in 1695. Apparently, the towns people were not as sober as the Scot had said.

But just how sober and industrious the young scholars were is not clear. Of the school, only two descriptions exist.

One says it was made up of 10 or 12 that it had "an ample playground."

Edison  
429



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History -  
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History)

### The Indians

Edison Township used to be called Raritan Township. Raritan Township took its name from a tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Indians who lived in this area. These Indians made a trail along the Raritan River to an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean (now called Perth Amboy).

### First Settlers

Different groups of people lived in Raritan Township. The first Europeans to explore the coast of New Jersey were the English navigators John and Sebastian Cabot. This was in 1498. A century later, Henry Hudson explored the same area for the Dutch East India Company. (He was trying to find a shorter route to India). Although Hudson did not find the route he was looking for, the reports of his travels brought the first European settlers to the area - the Dutch.

Naturally the English people thought that the land belonged to them (because it had been originally "discovered" by the Cabots), so fighting broke out between the Dutch and the English. Finally in 1674, the English gained control of this area. The area extended from the Raritan River to the Rahway River and two townships were formed; Woodbridge and Piscataway.

This area was expanded in 1681 when a group of settlers bought 10,000 acres of land from the Indians and established a ferry across the Raritan River (near the crossing of the present Albany St. Bridge). In 1683, Middlesex County was established with Piscataway as the County seat.

As the population increased farms were cleared and cultivated and schools and churches were established. The first church was built in 1689 on the site of the present Stelton Baptist Church. In 1695 the first school was built. In 1714, the second church, The Episcopal Mission Church of St. James was built on Woodbridge Ave. The earliest public road, which is still in use, was the Old Post Road through Bonhamtown and Piscataway. (see map)

### The Revolution

New Jersey stayed under the control of the British until 1774 when the First Provincial Congress met in New Brunswick to join the other colonists to revolt. No major battles were fought in Raritan Township, but some fighting did take place in 1777 at Bonhamtown (because it had a good observation point), Fords and Piscataway and elsewhere along the road we now know as Woodbridge Ave. (see map)

The area was crossed many times by Washington and his troops and by the British Redcoats. When the war ended, Washington rode to his inauguration along the Old Post Road from the Raritan Ferry on his way to New York City.



Like Old Post Road, King George Road and Oak Tree Road (whose name was derived from an ancient oak tree which stood in this area) were built along Indian trails.

### The 1800's

Except for a tornado, which destroyed many buildings in New Brunswick and Piscataway in 1835, the township became a prosperous farming community in the 1800's and improvements were made in transportation and communication. The Pennsylvania Railroad came into the township in the 1830's and in 1840 the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Company provided another route from New York to Philadelphia. In the 1870's railroad stations were constructed at Menlo and Stelton. Many wealthy New Yorkers built summer homes in Menlo and Oak Tree sections. (see map)

It was about this time that Edison was at work at his Menlo Park laboratory. Among his inventions were the phonograph, the incandescent electric lamp, the kinetoscope and a printing telegraph. He even produced some early talking motion pictures.

In 1870, a group of residents asked the state legislature to grant them independence from Woodbridge and Piscataway townships. They won and on March 17, 1870, the boundary lines were redrawn to create a new municipality: Raritan Township.

### The 1900's

The construction of a trolley line in 1900 brought more city dwellers into the township, and as the township developed, problems arose. In 1900, the residents of what is now Metuchen asked the state for a separate charter because of a disagreement over city funding. So the community of Metuchen was formed, leaving a "hole" in the middle of Raritan Township and reducing the area by 3 square miles. In 1905, residents of Highland Park followed Metuchen's example and further reduced the area by 2 square miles.

Raritan Township lost land to the federal government during WW-I to create the Raritan Arsenal and during WW-II to create Camp Kilmer.

Because the name "Raritan" had been used by several townships and municipalities in New Jersey, in 1954 the township changed its name to Edison.

### sources:

Saunders, Agnes G. and others. Notes on the History of Piscataway-town Raritan Township Middlesex County New Jersey.

League of Women Voters. Know your Township, Edison, New Jersey.

compiled by the Children's Department  
Edison Public Library

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"ASK AT DESK"

Reference

History -  
1600's - 1950's  
(Edison History)

Several hundred years before the arrival of the white man, groups of Lenni-Lenape Indians lived in settlements overlooking the Raritan River. They called the area "Piscataqua," from which Piscataway comes.

Dutch and Swedes were the first white men in this area, arriving in the middle of the 17th century. In 1651, a large tract of land, from the Raritan River to the Passaic, including what is now Edison Township was deeded by the Dutch King to Augustine Heermans, a Dutch settler.

In 1795, the Raritan Bridge, now known as the Albany St. Bridge, was built, and the area began to develop rapidly. Before 1870, the township was a part of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships. On March 17, 1870, the boundary lines were drawn, and the area was incorporated as a separate township. The "Raritan", derived from the Raritan tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Indians; it was chosen from three proposals: Metuchen, Washington and Raritan.

In 1900, residents of the area now known as Metuchen, petitioned the state to incorporate as a separate borough. This action put a "hole" in the middle of the township, and reduced the area of 3 square miles.

In 1905, residents of Highland park followed Metuchen's example and incorporated, further reducing the area of the township by about 3 square miles. The total area of Raritan Township is about 32 square miles.

Because several municipalities in New Jersey were named Raritan, at the general election in 1954, the voters approved the change to Edison Township. Instrumental in obtaining this change, were Mayor James C. Forgione and Mrs. Charles Wira, of "Women for Edison."

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*Ask At Desk*  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDISON TOWNSHIP  
(Formerly Raritan Township)  
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*History -  
1600's - 1950's  
(Edison History)*

Raritan Township takes its name from the Raritan Tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Indians, later known as the Delawares.

Raritan Township was incorporated in 1870 by an act of the State Legislature. It included portions of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships. Since that time, Metuchen, Highland Park, and South Plainfield have set up their own governments.

The first township election was April 16, 1870 in the old Metuchen Academy. The form of government was Township Committee. The result of the first election was as follows:

Luther H. Tappen-----Assessor  
Charles C. Campbell-----Collector  
Manning Freeman,  
W. E. Crowell,  
Augustus Blackford-----Township Committeemen  
Theodore A. Wood,  
Augustus Stelle,  
John T. Martin-----Clerk  
Michael M. Lupardus-----Freeholder  
Lewis Thomas-----  
Lewis Thomas-----Overseer of the Poor

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Piscatawaytown is one of the oldest communities in the State, dating back to 1666.

The first schoolhouse was built in Piscatawaytown in 1695, on land conveyed to the Drake, Hull, Higgins, and Slater families. The Old Town Hall, located at the Commons, was originally built as a school building, having been erected in 1892 to replace an earlier building destroyed by fire in that year.

The new Town Hall site at Woodbridge Avenue and Plainfield Avenue was purchased about 1927 at a cost of \$12,000. The present building was constructed about 1937.

Besides Piscatawaytown, some of the other settlements in the Township were Stelton, which was settled by the Stelles in 1688, and Bonhamtown, named after Nicholas Bonham.

Thomas Edison settled in the Menlo Park section of Raritan Township. The phonograph, telephone, and electric railroad were invented there. In December 1879, the first public demonstration of the Edison Carbon Incandescent Lamp was given at Menlo Park.

In 1900, Metuchen broke away from the Township and in 1905, Highland Park took similar action.

The Township covers approximately thirty-two square miles.

The following are the forms of government that have been used in the Township:

- (1) Township Committee form was used up to 1928.
- (2) Commission form was used up to 1958.
- (3) Mayor-Council Plan E. is used at the present.

The population from 1850 to the present time is as follows:

1850---2,975                      1950---16,348                      Estimated 1958---35,000

At the November 1954 election, the name of the Township was changed from Raritan to Edison. This became official the Second Wednesday in November at a Commissioner's meeting.

Information was obtained from the following sources:  
Notes on the History of Piscatawaytown, Raritan Township,  
Middlesex County, New Jersey----by Agnes Glen Saunders  
and Louis Du Bois, 1937

Population figures obtained from: Whitehead's East Jersey  
History\*New Jersey legislative Manual.



# Disgruntled Metuchenites Founded Edison Township

By MIRIAM JACOBS  
News Tribune Staff Writer

Multi-million dollar industrial complexes and housing developments now dot the land where red skinned natives clad in deerskins once walked along the banks of the Raritan River.

Long before the first Europeans stepped ashore onto the New World, the territory now designated Edison township was inhabited by the Leni-Lenape, a tribe of Indians whose name translated literally means "original people."

Today, the sole trace of these now-extinct people who were members of the Algonquin family and considered a branch of the Delaware nation is found only where the name of their tribe, the Raritan appears in historical or geographical context.

## ORIGINALLY RARITAN

Edison Township, originally known as Raritan Township for nearly three-quarters of its first century, was carved from adjacent Woodbridge and Piscataway townships in 1870 by residents who felt they were getting short shrift from the ruling political cliques of these respective communities.

Actual colonization of this territory dates back to September, 1609, when the Half Moon under the command of Henry Hudson was observed sailing along the shore of Sandy Hook by natives living along what is now the coastline of Monmouth County.

The Dutch dominated New Jersey and claimed the entire area from Cape Cod to the Delaware River, establishing trading posts in New Amsterdam, now New York City, and later in Bergen and Pavonia.

But the ascent of the English King Charles II to his country's throne led to a charter granted to his brother, James, Duke of York in 1664 for all land lying between the Connecticut River and Delaware Bay. Land from this charter was conveyed to Lord John Berkely and Sir George Carteret and led to English dominance and the proprietorship of what eventually came to be known as New Jersey. The governmental outline drawn up provided for a governor, a council of six to 12 to be selected by the governor and an assembly or representatives to be chosen

by the freemen of the province.

## TWO TOWNSHIPS

In 1666, a grant was made for a tract of land extending from the Raritan River to the Rahway River, and running back into the country, to create two townships to be known as Woodbridge and Piscataway, respectively.

The dividing line between these two townships followed generally a north-south direction along what is now the western portion of Metuchen and in the vicinity of Woodland Avenue in Plainfield. Middlesex County was created in 1682 by the General Assembly of East Jersey while it convened at Elizabethtown, later Elizabeth.

As the population gradually increased, schools and churches were established and farms were cleared and cultivated.

## ONE MAIN ROAD

Colonial roads criss-cross the area, with the Post Road extending across both Woodbridge and Piscataway, and in a general east to west direction from what is now Highland Park through Piscataway, Bonhamtown, Fords to Woodbridge. The Upper Road extended from the Woodbridge meeting house to the Metuchen Meeting House.

Still other roads ran from Metuchen northward through Pumpton and westerly to mills situated along the Raritan River, with several converging at what is today called the Raritan Landing.

Not until the early 1800s did the need for more adequate means of transportation come to light with the incorporation of the many existing turnpike companies.

The Middlesex and Essex Turnpike, now called the Lincoln Highway or Route 27 extended from New Brunswick through Menlo Park into the Woodbridge area.

The Woodbridge Turnpike extended from Highland Park to Woodbridge, following generally the route of Old Post Road.

The third main route, the Easton and Amboy Turnpike, extended from Fords west along the existing bed of Amboy or New Brunswick Avenue to Metuchen and on through New Durham, ending near Hadley Airfield.

## RAILROAD NEXT

Following the turnpikes was the construction of the New Jersey Railroad and

Transportation Co., now the Pennsylvania Railroad in the early 1830s which made water transportation facilities via the Raritan River much less important. Later came the Lehigh Valley Railroad, built in the late 1880s followed a few years later by the Port Reading Railroads.

Growth continued, but by 1870, residents of what was to become Raritan or Edison Township, led by a group of disgruntled Metuchen residents, who felt politicians in Woodbridge and Piscataway were ignoring their interests, petitioned the Legislature for independence and were granted an act creating the township.

For the next 30 years, Raritan Township prospered along normal lines, with Metuchen serving as the urbanized hub for the rural-oriented municipality. But in 1900, Metuchen pulled away and assumed a separate entity as a borough following revision of a state law governing municipalities that same year.

Then Highland Park, once known as Coe's Park and part of Raritan Township, filed a similar petition in 1905 and became an independent borough.

Both separation movements based on the interests of the populated or more urban areas as compared to the farming areas resulted in a loss of 17 per cent of the township's original area.

## RING OF FARMLAND

Loss of the township's geographical heart, Metuchen, left only a ring of farmland and greatly affected the growth of the township for the most part of the next 50 years.

The next decade saw a number of land subdivisions the first since 1870, made in the Piscataway area of the township adjoining Highland Park; in the Clara Barton district near Fords and in the area adjoining Metuchen. These developments were stimulated by the construction of a trolley line through the township in 1900.

A similar subdivision movement was prompted by the real estate boom of the early 1870's when the Menlo Park and Stelton sections were created, most likely due to the influence of the railroad stations which were established at both locations. Railroad construction by the

Raritan Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad during this period also lent impetus to the development of industry along the Raritan River.

Then came the First World War and with it the government takeover of a substantial 4.5 square mile piece of valuable river frontage for the creation of the Raritan Arsenal. This resulted not only in the loss of ratables to the township, but also meant the loss of potential industrial developments.

One redeeming aspect of

the war was the rapid expansion of the Nixon Nitration Works and the sales of portions of the Callard Farm at the foot of Meadow Road. This farm had been acquired several years earlier by a New York investor at \$1,000 per acre, who had the vision to realize the township's potentialities.

A general boom in real estate and building followed the end of the war, and with developments springing up in Piscatawaytown and Clara Barton sections as the

township's population doubled from 5,419 in 1920 to 10,123 in 1930.

The boom brought municipal improvements including concrete pavement on Main Street from Bonhamtown to Metuchen and other main thoroughfares; sidewalks in some area, a complete sanitary sewerage system consisting of sewers and treatment works in the Clara Barton area, and sewers in Piscataway town, and a municipal water supply, also in Piscataway-Stelton.

Post-war America un-

derwent drastic changes in life style, and at the height of the Roaring '20s, in 1927, the township changed its form of government by electing a three-man board of commissioners to more adequately meet the pressing needs of a growing municipality.

Under the guidance of Mayor Edward Meeker, and Commissioners Peter Knudsen and Julius Engel many of the street and sanitary capital improvements were made.

A zoning and planning commission was appointed in 1930 to guide the township's

growth, followed by state legislation authorizing planning boards. But it was too late to stop the uncontrolled land subdivision which put a permanent blot on some sections of the township and imposed a heavy burden on road maintenance. The commission functioned for about about one year and died.

Another sharp halt to growth came with the Depression. The only municipal construction was the building of the Piscatawaytown Sewage Treatment Plant, made man-

datory by the state and funded with federal moneys. Construction of Township Hall got underway during this same time, also with federal moneys.

The advent of the World War II meant another industrial loss to the township with the creation of Camp Kilmer. More than 1,000 acres assembled in 1909 by an out-of-town speculator were sold to the federal government in 1941 and turned into a staging area for troops bound for Europe or returning from the European theater of war.

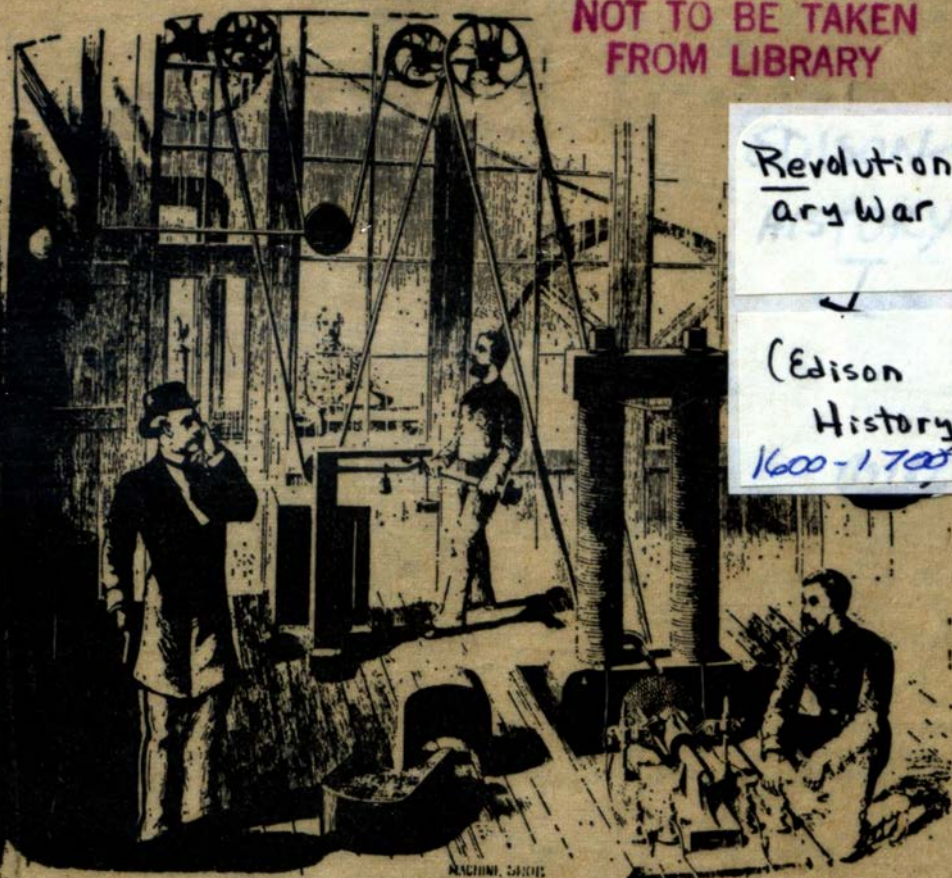


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Revolution-  
ary War

(Edison  
History)  
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THE EDISON DYNAMO — This early drawing, which first appeared in The Scientific American in 1879, shows the Thomas

Edison machine shop and four men testing Edison's dynamo.

## Bonhamtown Skirmish Aided Defeat of British Army

ASK AT  
DESK

Although Edison Township did not figure prominently in the Revolutionary War, it was the scene of several skirmishes.

One such skirmish occurred near Bonhamtown on the night of April 15, 1777, almost four months after Gen. George Washington had crossed the Delaware River to attack the Hessians at Trenton.

In the April skirmish, a detachment of Continental Army soldiers under the command of Capt. Alexander Paterson of the Pennsylvania 12th regi-

ment, attacked enemy pickets and captured 25.

Almost a month later, on May 10, a skirmish occurred in Piscataway between portions of two Colonial regiments and soldiers of the enemy's 71st Regiment of Scotch Regulars.

The Colonists beat back the Scottish forces, but were themselves driven back when the Scots received reinforcements from English troops quartered at Bonhamtown.

The British occupation of New Brunswick, Perth Amboy,

the Six Mile Run, Middleburgh, Piscataway, Woodbridge and Bonhamtown lasted from Dec. 2, 1776, to June 2, 1777.

John P. Wall and Harold E. Pickersgill in their History of Middlesex County from 1664 to 1920, indicate that "It was during this occupation that the true character of the enemy was divulged."

The two historians reported that "The soil was deluged with blood; they plundered friends and foes, suffered prisoners to perish for want of sustenance, violated the chastity of women, disfigured private dwellings and churches."

Following a skirmish at Piscataway between 700 Colonial troops and 1,000 British, the latter at first were defeated, but returned and continued the battle, at last defeating the Colonists.

Colonial foraging and scouting parties cut off all communication between New Brunswick and Perth Amboy except along the Raritan River. Lord Cornwallis had his British headquarters at New Brunswick and soon ran short of provisions.

A fleet of boats started up the river loaded with supplies, but the Colonists sank four or five of them through a barrage from six 32-pound cannons located on a bluff overlooking the river.

British General Howe attempted to re-open communications on March 8 near Bonhamtown but failed and was nearly captured. The Colonists continued to hold New Brunswick without communication until March 1777.

But although Edison did not play a major role, residents of Edison today can look back with pride on the accomplishments of Continental Army soldiers and farmers who aided in the British defeat.



History (1600's - 1960's)

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Seal of the



Township of Edison

THE JERSEYMEN OF EDISON HIGH PRESENT

# Historic Edison

Vol. I, No. 1

June 28, 1964

Twenty-five Cents

New Jersey

Tercentenary

1664



1964

People, Purpose, Progress

## Three Hundred Years

By - Bonnalea Peterson

This year is New Jersey's 300th anniversary. The Jerseymen at Edison High have been doing research on the history of Edison Township. Some of the information we have uncovered is in this newspaper.

This area was once inhabited by groups of Lenni-Lenape and Algonquin Indians.

The name Piscataway was derived from the name Piscataqua. Settlers moving here from New Hampshire named the area Piscataqua after the town where they had previously lived.

Raritan Township was part of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships before 1870. The area was then incorporated as a township with Metuchen, Washington and Raritan proposed as names. "Raritan," derived from the Raritan tribe of Lenni-Lenape Indians was chosen.

The first schools were set up in March, 1689. The first schoolmaster of the Oak Tree School was James Fullerton, and was a free school. Many schools at that time had an admission fee. A schoolmaster's salary at this time was about 24

pounds a year. John Baker was employed in 1694 to teach for six months on trial. The school orders were that:

"Ye school be kept this winter time until 9 o'clock at night."

During the Revolutionary War no classes were held. When school was resumed, money for teaching children who could not afford to pay for their schooling was obtained from a tax on dogs.

Piscataway school was built in 1695 of logs and had an ample playground. Inside the building were small unpainted desks, and rude oak slabs for seats. This school was demolished by the hurricane on June 19, 1835. A new school to replace it was built in 1837. Other schools developed in all areas of the township at about the same time.

One of the earliest industries was brick making in the area of Ford's Corner and Sand Hills.

Copper was first discovered in Menlo Park in the 18th Century. The mine was eventually purchased by Thomas Edison to secure copper for his experiments.

### Program Edison

#### Tercentenary Celebration

Official Opening of Edison Tercentenary Celebration—1:30 P.M., Sunday, June 28, Menlo Park Shopping Center.

An Afternoon of Music — 2:00 P.M., Sunday, June 28  
Menlo Park Shopping Center

300 years of Fashion — 8:00 P.M., Edison Monday, June 29  
High School Auditorium

Thomas A. Edison's First Motion Pictures Tuesday, June 30  
— 8:00 P.M., Edison High School Auditorium

Historymobile — 10:00 A.M. to 8:00 Thursday, July 2  
P.M., Edison High School Grounds

Edison Players Present—"The Boyfriend",  
8:30 P.M. — Edison High School Auditorium

Folk Dances—8:00 P.M., Roosevelt Park Friday, July 3  
Amphitheater

Grand Parade—2:00 P.M., Clara Barton Sunday, July 5  
Area

Admission Free To All Events

### First Families Settled Here By 1668

Most of the "first families" of what is now Edison Township came from the area of Newbury, Massachusetts, and the rest as passengers aboard the vessels *Henry* and *Francis* and *Caledonia*, both of which sailed from Scotland and landed at Perth Amboy late in the 17th Century.

Names of these pioneer families are still to be found among the present-day inhabitants of the township. They include descendants of the Stelles, Martins, Campbells, Bonhams, Dunns, Dunhams, Edgars, Comtons, Tappens, Thornalls, Hamptons, Achens, Laings, Kellys, Ayres, Fitzandolphs, Freemans, Bloomfields, Paynes, Robins, Mundys, Carmans, Rowlands, and Laforges.

Their settlements were Piscataway (1668), Stelton (1668), and Bonhamtown (1682). Stelton was settled by the Stelles, and Bonhamtown by Nicholas Bonham who is recorded as owner of lands by allotment and as a Freeholder in 1682.

### First County Court Here

The first court in Middlesex County was held in Piscatawaytown on June 19, 1683, Samuel Dennis presiding as both president and judge. There were five assistants, Edward Slater, James Giles, Capt. John Bishop, Samuel Hall, and Benjamin Hall. After this courts alternated between Piscataway, Woodbridge, and Amboy, for the remainder of the 17th Century.

A grand jury was first empanelled at Woodbridge, September 16, 1684.

John English, a servant of Hopewell Hull, Piscatawaytown, met his death by drowning in the Raritan River, May 25, 1685. Jurors decided that death was due to water!

### Tavern Rates Officially Set In 1748

Hot meal of meat, etc. 10 pence  
Cold meal of meat, etc. 7 pence  
Loding per night ..... 4 pence  
Rum by the gill ..... 4 pence  
Brandy by the gill ..... 6 pence  
Wine by the quart

two shillings 8 pence  
Strong beer by the quart

5 pence  
Cider by the quart ..... 4 pence  
Metheglin by the quart  
one shilling 6 pence

Tavern rates were regulated by the colonial assemblies, and each town was required to keep an ordinary or tavern for the relief and entertainment of "strangers." There was a fine for the omission of this civic responsibility at the rate of 40 shillings per month.

Only inkeepers were empowered to retail liquors in quantities less than two gallons. In 1677, the quantity was reduced to one gallon, and in 1683 innkeepers were debarred the privilege of recovering debts in excess of five shillings.

The assembly authorized innkeepers to retail strong liquors by the quart. These laws led to great excesses and drunkenness in several of the towns, with the

### Revellers Take Heed

Drunkenness was frowned upon—to the extent of a one shilling fine for the first offense, two shillings for the second offense, and two shillings six pence for the third. If you were unable to pay the fine, the alternative was corporal punishment. Unruly revellers were placed in the stocks until sober.

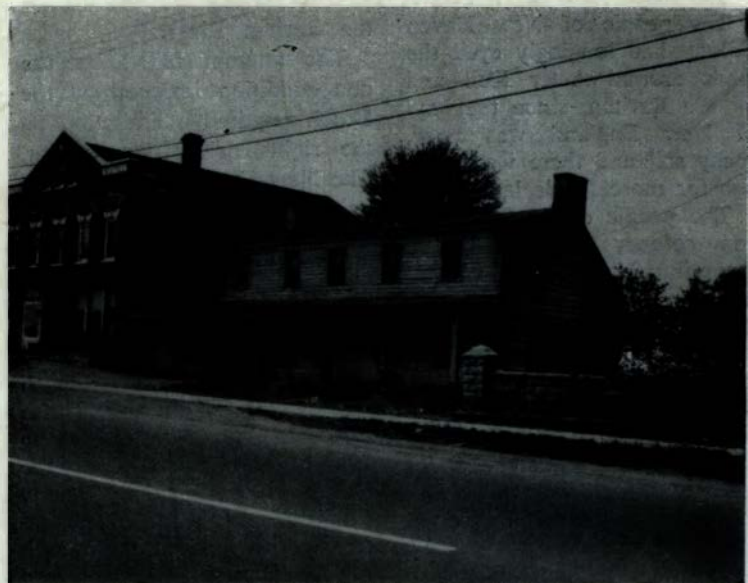
The fines were of little use, since they were not excessive. In 1682, there was a stiffening of fines—five shillings for each offense—or six hours in the stocks.

The records of the time seem to indicate that the increase in punishment may have been accompanied by an increase in the vice. This may be the reason for the eventual removal of restrictions on the sale of liquors in small quantities.

The administration of liquor regulations was modified under the Royal governors. Many of the earlier restrictions were eased probably because the use of strong spirits was considered necessary! (See story "Night-walkers to Meet Constable.")

people selling liquor in private houses.

An excise law passed in 1692, and repealed the following year, confined the licensing of retailers to the governor.



Jackson Tappen Tavern, Bonhamtown, built 1740. Rumors have it that Washington stopped here. This is entirely possible, since it lay on the main turnpike. However, no documentation has come to light to confirm this.

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Army troops relaxing near gate to Raritan Arsenal, 1918.

## Slater Blocks' King's Court

In 1700, five justices of the Middlesex County court were on their way to the Piscatawaytown Town House to open the session of the County Court. Upon their arrival at the Town House, they found the door nailed shut, and were told they could not enter, since the building was the property of the town.

Edward Slater, of quitrent resistance fame, and several others tried to prevent the sheriff from opening the door. When that official kicked the door open, the mob that had gathered rushed in after him and threatened to throw him out. One of the justices, Samuel Dennis, tried to help the sheriff, but Slater grabbed him by the collar, demanding to know why he was there. Dennis answered, "To maintain His Majesty's Court." After that, Slater pulled away.

Three others in the mob demanded to know by whose authority the court was convened, and when told, "By the King's," they replied that court could not be held there since it was "the town's house."

This was probably too much for the justices, as they withdrew to the home of the local constable.

## Founder of R.I. College Born Here

James Manning, who became the first president of what is now Brown University, was born in Piscataway on October 22, 1738. His great-grandfather, Jeffery Manning, was one of the earliest settlers. He was also a descendant, maternally, of the Fitz-Randolphs, early settlers in the region. Manning graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1762. During the last days of the French and Indian War in 1763, he was ordained an evangelist and travelled throughout the colonies.

He suggested the establishment of a college in Rhode Island for the Baptists, but before the idea bore fruit, he was sent as pastor to Warren, Rhode Island, where he organized a Baptist congregation. In September 1765, his idea for a college became a reality and he was chosen to be the first president of Rhode Island College (the name was changed to Brown in 1804).

## Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible had it not been for the assistance of many individuals throughout the township. Much of the material developed by research was not used due to lack of space. This information will be included in a later comprehensive history of Edison Township.

Foremost among those assisting are: Jerseymen Committee — D. Boidue, R. Campbell, E. Campbell, A. D'Amico, R. Gottlieb, C. Henderson, S. Leonard, M. Merson, S. Nahama, B. Peterson, J. Petro, A. Petuskey, R. Smith, N. Tobiasson. Organizations — Special Collections, Rutgers University Library, Donald A. Sinclair, Curator; New Jersey Historical Society Library; Edison Laboratories National Historical Museum; Secretary, Board of Education, Edison Township; C. Boyle, Principal, Edison High School; Oscar Kaus, Township Clerk; D. Robinson, Chairman, Art Dept., Edison High School. Community Residents: A. Bell, J. Brinckmann, Rev. J. H. Martin, H. Sallitt, Rev. S. W. Stewart, H. VanBuskirk, L. Russell, G. Zalinsky, A. Burkhardt.

Our apologies to any who may have been inadvertently omitted.

## "Nightwalkers" To Meet Constable

The Puritan background of our earliest settlers was reflected in the "blues laws" which regulated conduct. Sabbath observance was strictly enforced. On the Lord's Day there was to be a complete abstinence from all servile work. Unlawful recreations and unnecessary travelling were, at the same time, prohibited.

Taking the Lords' name in vain resulted, at first, in a one shilling fine. This was increased to two shillings six pence in 1682. Again, inability to pay resulted in a sojourn in the stocks or in a public whipping.

"Prizes, stage-plays, games, masques, revels, bull baitings, and cockfights, which excited the baser passions of the people to rudeness, cruelty, looseness, and irreligion" were discouraged and punished by courts of justice.

Curfew laws there were, and they were enforced. "Nightwalkers" or revellers after nine o'clock were to be secured by the constable until the morning. Unless excused for their lateness, they were bound over to court.

Liars were also punished. Presumably, the first offense resulted in a warning. The second "fib" resulted in a 20 shilling fine. If not paid, it meant the stocks or corporal punishment.

We reported elsewhere that the administration of drinking regulations was somewhat lax during the administration of the Royal governors because it was considered "necessary." Keepers of public houses were not to allow "tippling on the Lord's Day, except for necessary refreshments!"

# 17th Century Area Surrendered to Rent Riots In Protest Dutch In 1673

The first serious trouble began in East New Jersey about 1670 when the first "quitrents" fell due. A vestige of the late Middle Ages, they were, in theory, a payment of the services owed by a tenant to the lord of the manor. The payment of such rents was common to all proprietary colonies—of which New Jersey was one.

When the settlers accepted the New Jersey Concessions and Agreements, the acceptance carried with it the requirement to pay a quitrent of one-half penny per acre each year after 1670. The settlers, as the time of payment approached, insisted that they held title from King James and the Indians and would not pay the proprietors. It must be assumed that the settlers were aware of this since they all held land grants. Their argument was not valid—they did not hold title from the King, but from the proprietors. In accepting grants of land, the patentees had agreed to pay James or "his Assigns" and, Berkeley and Carteret were his assigns.

For two years there was intermittent rioting. The towns of Elizabeth, Newark, Middletown, Shrewsbury and Piscataway were the fields in which were sown most of the seeds of discontent.

Philip Carteret wasted no time in attempting to resurvey the lands and redistribute them. He sent a warrant on April 4, 1670 authorizing a survey to his Surveyor-General Vauquelin, accompanied by a letter of explanation—"For the Piscataway men their dividing their meadows and land without order will signifie nothing for I am about to patten ther land to particular persons which will be glad to have it upon the same conditions they might have had itt, and to turne them out of the contrey; and then lett them go into ingland; and disput it in law with the Lords proprietors who hath the greatest interest. I have not more att present."

In November 1672, the Assembly was dissolved and two of the deputies from Piscataway—Edward Slater and John Gilman—held protest meetings at the house of Frances Drake. At the meetings, Slater read several "seditious papers" declaring the governor and government of the Province to be "odyouse in the eyes and hearts of the people."

Council members accused Slater of trying to stir up a mutiny against lawful authority and insurrection and open rebellion against the "King's Royal power and Government . . . and his peace in the s'd province."

It was not long before Slater found himself before two justices. They called no witnesses (other than themselves) and sentenced Slater to a year in the Woodbridge jail, or until he paid a Thirty-Pound fine and furnished bond for good behavior.

As it developed, Slater only spent six months as the guest of the Province. His sentence was remitted and he was released from confinement on April 1, 1682.

For a very short time the Dutch reoccupied their former possessions in what had become New Jersey. The *Minutes of the Council of New Netherlands 1673-1674* notes that a petition of the inhabitants of "the villages of Elisabeth Towne, Newark, Woodbridge and Piscataway" was granted.

The townsmen had requested permission to send delegates to New Orange "to treat with the Admirals and Associate Council of war respecting the surrender of their towns under obedience of their High Mightinesses, the Lords States of the United Netherlands, and his Serene Highness, the Prince of Orange, and that no audience be granted to their late Governor, Capt. John Berry, before and until the same be granted to the said Delegates, &c."

John Baker, Jacob Melyn, and John Ogden had been opposed to the Proprietary government under the English. These Piscatawaytown men saw this as a good chance to thwart Berry's influence with the Dutch.

On August 18, 1673, the Dutch granted the same privileges to the people of Piscataway "as will be accorded to native born subjects and Dutch towns." Their land titles were confirmed and the men were guaranteed that they would not be impressed into the Dutch Navy during any war between the Netherlands and Great Britain.

On August 19, the towns were ordered to nominate "a double number for Schepens or Magistrates of said towns." Also to be selected were two Deputies, three Schouts, and three Secretaries. From Piscatawaytown, John Ogden became

Schout, and Samuel Hopkins, Secretary. They formed a part of the representation of all the towns—"Elizabeth Town, Wood Bridge Shrousbury, New-Worke, Piscatawaij & Middle-towne."

September 6, 1673 was the day when Captain Kuyf and Captain Snell were commissioned travel with the clerk of the Council of War, Abram Varlet, to the towns to administer the oath of allegiance to all inhabitants. They reported back on September 14 noting that all of the men of Piscatawaytown—43—had taken the oath.

Militia officers were elected and sworn in at the same time, "Bennayah" Dunham was elected Captain; Joseph Snow Lieutenant, and John Longstaff, Ensign.

All instructions sent to Piscatawaytown and surrounding areas were written in English while they were under Dutch control.

## Committee Edison Tercentenary Celebration

Honorary Chairman—Mayor Anthony M. Yelenesics  
Chairman—Alexander M. Bell, Jr.  
Assistant Chairmen—Andrew J. Fogas  
Frank D'Aquila  
Historians—Earl S. Miers  
John R. Anderson  
Program—Bernard J. Griffin  
Vincent Gligi  
George Maryansky  
Stephen Capestro  
Coordinators—Miss Barbara Conrad  
Mrs. Vincent De Mers  
Mrs. Matthew Drwal  
Edward Kraszewski  
George Lane  
Mrs. Claire Zamonis  
Mrs. Eugene Childers  
Treasurer—Mrs. Albert Petro  
Secretary—Mrs. Samuel D'Amico  
Publicity—Mrs. William Presch

## ABOUT PAGE ONE PHOTOGRAPH

The photograph across the top of page one was originally published as an illustration in an 1876 atlas and history of Middlesex County. The Augustus Stelle, whose property is shown beyond the railroad, was a prominent agriculturist and land owner. The farm mansion, located where Camp Kilmer now is, was built by him in 1840, the same year the farm came into his possession. In 1921 it was the home of his daughters, who had known no other residence up to that time.

Augustus, the son of Isaac and Frances (Dunn) Stelle, was born October 23, 1815 and died January 14, 1899. He was educated in the district and was an influential democrat. A member of the Stelton Baptist Church, he married Maria Stelle February 12, 1840 in Plainfield. His wife, who had been born in Plainfield on October 25, 1817, died January 15, 1899, surviving Augustus, her husband, by only one day. They are buried side-by-side in the Piscatawaytown cemetery.

## Stuyvesant Frustrated Early Settlement

The people of New Haven Colony had longingly eyed the lands around Acter Kull and on the Raritan, since the land of New England was poor, rocky soil and there was a desire for more fertile lands.

The people of the New Haven colony contemplated a move into New Netherland, but no actual move was made, other than some settlements on Long Island. Deputations were sent to New Amsterdam (New York City) to inquire into details of liberal Dutch offers and to investigate the conditions of lands that might be available.

Governor Peter Stuyvesant entertained them courteously—so much so that delegation made a favorable report and a second deputation was sent to Stuyvesant. This delegation was authorized to negotiate for the settlement of a plantation near

the Raritan River.

The attempt failed because one condition imposed by the Dutch required a limitation on the rights of self-government. The New Haven people wanted an absolutely independent community with all rights of self-government. When they insisted on this, and the Dutch obstinately refused, negotiations were broken off.

In 1663, some of the English settlers from New England who had settled in Flushing, Long Island, revolted against the Dutch Government. Twenty Englishmen from that area attempted to land at the mouth of the Raritan to establish a plantation. Governor Stuyvesant however, prevented their landing by having an armed party awaiting them at the mouth of the Raritan.



## Stelton Baptists Oldest

Two and three quarter centuries have passed since this church was constituted as an independent church. Unfortunately, no records or minutes of the church exist prior to August, 1781. They were destroyed during the Revolutionary War, either by bands of marauding British soldiers, or—which is more probable—by the clerk of the church at that time, who, according to tradition, was a Tory.

It is not known how many of the early settlers were Baptists, but an Episcopal rector in Amboy, in 1711, wrote a letter referring to the fact that "the Anabaptists swarmed in these parts," and they held meetings in the Town House.

In 1689, a Baptist church was founded at Piscataway. The First Day Baptist Society of Piscataway was organized by six men: Hugh Dunn Edmund Dunham, John Smalley, John Drake, Nicholas Bonham, and John Randolph.

With the assistance of Rev. Thomas Killingsworth, who had organized the Middletown Baptist Church the year before, they formed this Baptist Church.

In 1705, a group of thirteen members, led by Edmund Dunham, left the First Day Society to form a Seventh Day Baptist Church near New Market.

A famous story, concerning the conversion of Edmund Dunham to a belief in the seventh day sabbath, comes down to us through the writings of Mr. Morgan Edwards. One warm Sunday afternoon, Mr. Dunham observed his neighbor, Hezekiah Bonham, doing some work around his yard. Edmund admonished Hezekiah, warning him against doing servile work on the Lord's Day, in defiance of the scriptures. Bonham asked for scriptural proof that the first day of the week was holy by divine command. Mr. Dunham began to search the Bible and gradually became convinced that the Sabbath should be observed on Saturday. Acting on this belief he became the first pastor of the Seventh Day Church. In 1707, the Piscataway Church was among the five churches united to form the Philadelphia Association, the first Baptist Association in America and the forerunner of the American Baptist Association.

During Mr. Drake's pastorate the church continued to

## Washington Ate Here

While there is no evidence that Washington "slept here", there is evidence that the General, his staff, and their horses ate here.

John Dunham, of Piscataway, gave a receipt to Alexander Hamilton, on July 10, 1778 for £ 2: 4/: 9d.

There were nine breakfasts, hay for the horses and a gill of bitters. Not one to waste time, Washington wrote a letter to Jeremiah Wadsworth about some cattle at Barbadoes Neck. This communication is datelined "On the March, July 10, 1778," and is dated at the foot as given at headquarters.

For a few moments, Piscataway was the "headquarters" of the Continental Army as the commander ate one of the "nine breakfasts."

meet in the Town House. In 1731, with admirable foresight, the church purchased four and six-tenths acres about a mile west of Piscatawaytown. No building was erected on the site until 1748.

Even though two groups broke away and formed new churches, the Town House was too small for the needs of the Piscataway church. In 1748 a meeting house was erected on the lot purchased in 1731. This meeting house was forty-six feet wide by thirty-six feet long and was, according to a document of the time, "a well finished house, but wanting the necessary convenience of a stove." For fifty years the church worshiped without this convenience. It was not until 1798 that it was voted "that the trustees devise means to procure a stove against next winter."

In many places, even farther north than this and later than 1798, the installation of stoves in meeting houses was regarded as a useless and perhaps impious innovation and a reflection on the piety and dignity of those who had worshipped in former years.

Isaac Stelle served from 1759 to 1781 and was the first minister of the church to be born, raised, baptized, licensed, and ordained in Piscataway. During the time that the second Stelle served the church, Reune Runyon was licensed to preach and took Pastor Stelle's place when he died.

Before filling the position, however, Pastor Runyon had served in the Morristown Baptist Church during the Revolutionary War. *continued on page 5*

## Five British Regiments in Bonhamton

Five British regiments were stationed in the Bonhamtown-Piscataway town area during the Revolutionary war, while the loyal government was in control of this area. According to contemporary accounts, the men assigned to these units "robbed and harried the residents for a considerable period, burning the houses and barns, and committing other outrages."

Perhaps the excesses alleged to His Britannic Majesty's troops were due to the attitude of the people of the area who were, for the most part, loyal to the Patriot cause.

At least one of the British units was composed of Highlanders, who were reported to have taken part in the skirmishes that occurred in April and May of 1777. British occupation of the area lasted from December 2, 1776 to June 22, 1777.

The location of Bonhamtown was as important to the British as to the Americans, since Lord Cornwallis (later to surrender at Yorktown) had his headquarters in New Brunswick. The American troops had cut off all communications into and out of New Brunswick, except for the Raritan River. On at least one occasion, March 8, 1777, General William Howe attempted to open the communications at Bonhamtown, but failed—in fact, he was nearly captured, so effective was the blockade of New Brunswick by American militia units.

## Two Revolutionary Reports

Bonhamtown, April 15, 1777

"A detachment under the command of Captain Alexander Paterson, of the Pennsylvania 12th Regiment, commanded by Colonel Cook, attacked the Piquet Guard of the enemy at two o'clock this morning, about four hundred yards from Bonhamtown, and after a short but obstinate engagement, the whole of the guard, twenty-five in number were either killed or taken prisoner. Lieutenant Frazier of the 71st Regiment was killed on the spot. The enemy, though advantageously posted, did not attempt to support their guard; but retired with precipitation to their works. Our officers and soldiers behaved with the greatest coolness and courage on this occasion. Their conduct would do honor to the best disciplined troops. We had Lieutenants McAlharton and Reily, of Colonel Cook's regiment, wounded, but not mortally."

"Post near Bonhamtown, May 11, 1777.

"I have the pleasure to inform you that yesterday part of General Stevens division attacked the Royal Highlanders and six companies of light infantry. It was a bold enterprise; they being posted within two miles of Bonhamtown, and about the same distance from Brunswick. The action continued about an hour and a half. The continental troops behaved well, drove in the pikets at Bonhamtown, attacked and drove the Highlanders out of a wood they had taken possession of near to Piscataqua town. The enemy were reinforced, but were again compelled to give way. They were reinforced a second time; when, upon due consideration of our situation with respect to the enemy's different posts (at Brunswick, Raritan Landings, and Bonhamtown), it was judged advisable to retire. The retreat was made in excellent order and our loss is inconsiderable. I congratulate you on this advantage obtained over the enemy's best troops. The Highlanders, obstinately brave, were too proud to surrender—which cost many of them dear."

—"Name Witheld"

## St. James Church Center Of Area's Early History

St. James Episcopal Church on Woodbridge Avenue has seen most of the history of the township pass by its doors. Chartered by Queen Anne in 1714, the parish was established in 1694. As early as 1703, there is a published record of a sermon preached here by Rev. George Keith. Some months later, the Reverend John Brooke "gathered a large congregation in Piscataqua." The original church structure was built in 1724. This was destroyed by a hurricane in 1835, but was restored and rebuilt using original fittings and materials. Amongst these were the bell, cast in England and brought to America in 1702, and the three-decker pulpit. This is the oldest purely colonial church building in the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey, and has been selected by the Advisory Committee of the Historic American Buildings survey as possessing exceptional historical and architectural interest worthy of the most careful preservation for the benefit of future generations.

During the Revolutionary War, the church was used as a British barracks. In front of the edifice is the last resting place of some English and

surrounding the church was the center of government for the counties of Middlesex and Somerset at one time, and was the site of the old Town House.

Town House was one of the old places that should have been preserved, but was ruthlessly destroyed through the years. Old records always refer to it as being in a state of disrepair, and all that was left to posterity was the foundation. The old Town House was located on what is the Skewis lot in the cemetery, however, its site was lost between 1829 and 1929.

The late Reverend W. L. Phillips, former rector of St. James, related that he had a conversation with the late Oscar Martin, who was 90 years of age in 1943, during which the latter related the fact that his grandfather had helped to remove the remains of the foundation of the "old Town House." This enabled us to locate the site as being in a place adjoining the Skewis lot in Piscataway Cemetery, on the northwest corner about 60 feet from the street.

The Old Town House was used by various religious groups—Quakers, Seventh Day Baptist, and what the Rev. George



St. James Protestant Episcopal Church. One of the finest examples of colonial church architecture in New Jersey.

Scotch soldiers, 33 in number who were either slain in a skirmish one-half mile to the east or who died of wounds or sickness during the time from December 1776 to June 1777 while the church was used as a barracks.

The cemetery surrounding the church is not church property, but is administered by a local cemetery association. The area

Keith referred to in 1704 as "Euthchians." Civil meetings were held there as well. In the middle of the 18th Century the Town House fell into decay and boards and timbers went into other houses in the area.

St. James Rectory is located on the site of the old Hopewell Inn, where Washington stopped during the retreat across the Jerseys in 1776. The old building survived into the 20th Century, but was in such disrepair that it was decided to take it down. The fireproof from the "taproom of the Inn" was sold to someone in New York.

Across from the church was the district school. In the early 19th Century, this was a two-story building, with one floor for the boys and one for the girls. John Martin was the teacher just prior to 1850, and was the local surveyor, as well. When he had surveying to do, he simply closed school until he was finished. The next teacher in the Piscataway Seminary, as it was known, was a Mr. Palmer, of Perth Amboy, who later became a lawyer. In 1894 the Seminary burned, and a new frame building was erected in 1896.



18th Century house off the Commons, Piscatawaytown.



## It Began at Menlo Park

An address delivered on the 1964 birthday of Thomas Alva Edison by Robert Smith, President, the Jerseymen of Edison High School, at the Edison Memorial, Menlo Park.

Ladies and Gentlemen. Today we are here to commemorate Thomas Alva Edison's birthday and at this time I would like to read a passage written by Sterling North. It is dedicated to Edison and brings to mind something we all take for granted.

"When the wires go down in a big storm, we are suddenly aware of an earlier, darker world—the world before Edison perfected his incandescent light. We grope through the gloom with candles, our shadows looming large upon the wall.

"It is as though the house were dead, no button or switch or dial responds to our touch. The television set is silent and dark. The little motors in our many household appliances refuse to turn. Refrigerators and freezers soon cease to be cold. Electric stoves and percolators and toasters give no heat. We huddle around the fireplace like cabin dwellers, aware that even the oil burner in the furnace cannot operate without its electric oil pump—for a day or two this primitive existence is high adventure, but it is hard to keep clean without hot water. We strain our eyes trying to read by flickering yellow light. Soon we tire of this strenuous game of playing we are pioneers. Light is precious and hard to obtain, and darkness breeds fear, ignorance, and superstition. We step back centuries when the lights go off, and how grateful we are when those incandescent globes begin to glow again.

"When Thomas Alva Edison died in 1931 at the age of eighty-four, he had more than 1400 inventions to his credit, including such miraculous ones as the phonograph and moving pictures. Of all his contributions to mankind, however, his greatest was his perfection of the electric bulb—inexpensive, odorless, and dependable—light in such abundance that no monarch of the past could even imagine such luxury.

"We are children of light! Without the sun's warm and cheerful rays, we would swiftly die. Without electric light and power we would slowly slip back into a world of shadows.

In this passage, Sterling North reminds us of what we have been taking for granted. But today we have come here to celebrate the birthday of Thomas Alva Edison.

If you do any research on Edison, you will find that he often said, "I find what the world needs, then I go ahead and try to invent it." And, he usually succeeded.

While he took out a tremendous number of patents in his working lifetime, Edison is best remembered for those in connection with the telegraph, telephone, electric light, production and distribution of electric power, and the storage battery.

Thomas Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847, of Dutch and Scotch ancestry. One great-grandfather lived to be 102 and, though Edison himself died when he was only eighty-four, he attained a remarkable old age.

continued on page 7



## THOMAS A. EDISON AT MENLO PARK

1. Thomas A. Edison—The Wizard of Menlo Park.
2. Sketch of telegraph and telephone connections made to Edison's laboratory at Menlo Park. Symbolic of his "speaking to the world."
3. Edison in the cab of his electric locomotive — Menlo Park, 1882.
4. The Edison Laboratory, Menlo Park. It was in this building that Edison perfected his incandescent lamp. Machine shop in background. This is now the site of the memorial tower.
5. Inside the electrician's room in the laboratory.
6. Edward H. Johnson, one of Edison's most important pioneer associates of Menlo Park days.
7. The Edison factory at Menlo Park and its employees. This building was located between the present Route 27 and the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks.
8. Edison's residence at Menlo Park. This was standing just above the present marker at the corner of Christie Street and Route 27.

9. Edison's first successful electric locomotive and train, 1880. The railroad ran from Menlo Park to Pumptown.
10. John Kruesi, another of Edison's most important Menlo Park pioneer associates.
11. The laboratory interior, Menlo Park, where the first practical incandescent lamp was perfected by Thomas Edison. In this same building, the great inventor and his associates developed the phonograph and improved the telephone transmitter. Building now reconstructed at Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.
12. The "first incandescent lighting-wiring bill," November 15, 1881.
13. Mural of the Edison complex at Menlo Park. Painting now located at the Edison Laboratory Museum, West Orange, New Jersey.
14. Mrs. Jordan's boarding house, Christie Street, Menlo Park. Several of Edison's pioneers lived here and it is credited with being the first house entirely lighted by

- incandescent lamps. House now at the Henry Ford Museum.
15. Charles Batchelor, another important Edison Pioneer at Menlo Park.
16. Thomas A. Edison demonstrated his tinfoil phonograph before the National Academy of Sciences meeting in Washington, D. C., and to President Rutherford B. Hayes at the White House. This portrait was taken by Mathew Brady, Civil War photographer, in April 1878.
17. Frances R. Upton, Edison's electrical engineer. His home still stands in Menlo Park, along Route 27.
18. The glass house, where incandescent globes were made for Edison's laboratory.
19. The machine shop. Site of present-day museum next to memorial tower.
20. [All photos, except 11, courtesy of the Edison Laboratory National Museum, West Orange, N. J.]
21. [Credit for photo 11: Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan]

## Edison Railway Forerunner of Trolley Car Era

Few people living in Edison Township, and even in Menlo Park, where it happened, realize that the giant electric locomotives flashing through on the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad are directly descended from the electric railway's humble beginning in Menlo Park in 1880.

It was then that Thomas A. Edison built his first experimental railroad. The tracks, laid

over rough ground, ran down a slope near Mine Gully. The 12-horsepower motor of his first engine pulled three cars—a flat car, an open awning car, and a box car, called "the Pullman."

Later, this line was dismantled, and Edison constructed, in 1882, a 2½ mile narrow gauge road between Dark Lane (Grove Avenue), Metuchen, and his laboratory in Menlo Park. Later this line was extended to Pumptown, where a turntable was located.

Financial difficulties slowed up work, but tracks were laid between Highland Park, Piscatawaytown, Bonhamtown, and

Metuchen via Woodbridge Avenue. At Bonhamtown, the tracks turned northward and entered Metuchen via Main Street. The trolley era was to last for thirty-four years.

In 1898, the Perth Amboy Railroad Company began pushing a line toward the north to meet a line from Rahway, and west to meet the New Brunswick line. When opened, the two routes met at the corner of Amboy Avenue and Main Street, Metuchen. Three years later, these companies merged and were taken over by the East Jersey Traction Company. Another merger came along in

1904. This company and the East Jersey Street Railway Company were merged into the Elizabeth and Raritan River Street Railway Company.

The finest interurban line ran through the area—this was the "Fast Line" operated by Public Service. The big green cars were equipped with leather seats, washrooms, drinking water, and lavatories.

Operation of the trolley lines in and about Edison Township was not without its tragedy. On May 11, 1903, a car bound from Metuchen to New Brunswick hit a brewery wagon at the Bonhamtown car barns.

## Stelton Baptist, Oldest

continued from page 3  
tionary war. While he ministered in Piscataway four ministers were licensed to preach.

According to the earliest church records, church meetings were held to hear both legal and personal disputes between members, to discipline those who stayed away from church services, to consider charges of dishonesty and immorality against members and to give those accused an opportunity to be heard. Disputes over property and boundary lines and charges of unfair dealings in buying and selling produce were heard and settled in the church business meetings. In all cases judgment, guilt or innocence, were made and guilty persons barred from the sacraments or, in extreme cases, excommunicated from the church. A man who had been excommunicated might find that his neighbors would not lift a finger to help him in a disaster such as the burning of his barn. Such a loss was considered just retribution for the acts that had caused his expulsion.

The following excerpts from church minutes will illustrate some church discipline.

"April 30, 1786: Our Sister Naomi Ross being charge with keeping company with a man not her husband, not knowing her husband to be dead, resolved that she abstain from the communion Table until further order in that matter."

"1787 Oct 31. 1st our Sister Hannah Wright being charged with taking property not her own, was laid before the church and appeared with such weight, that she was debarred communion and left to clear her character at some future period, but after sufficient length of time being given, much pains taken thereabout, and she not being able to give satisfaction, the Church proceeded to her Excommunication."

"1790, March 31—Brother Taylor is accused with being very profane in his common language in his Family, whereupon he was cited to appear and give satisfaction respecting the above charges."

Among all the records, one excuse for intoxication is so ingenious that it bears repeating here: "May 27, 1846—The case of Brother Le Forge—At a previous meeting he admitted being drunk on one occasion. Now he confessed that he had been drunk on one other time at his Mother's. His excuse for it was, that he had a sore arm and was advised to wash it with rum but could not get his coat off and concluded, it might do as well to take it inwardly—so he drank it and it made him drunk."

In these early times denominational lines were strictly drawn and the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians did no co-operate at all. Those of the Baptist Church who "went over" to other denominations were considered.

"Feb. 29, 1832: It was stated that Sister Tanner has joined the Methodist Society. It was therefore voted that our Sister Mercy Dayton and Jane Walker be a committee to wait on her and endeavor to reclaim her."

In 1825 it was decided that the old meeting house, which had been in use for seventy-five years, was inadequate and a new one would be constructed on the same site for the sum of \$2,495.



## New Dover Mother Church

The New Dover Methodist Episcopal Church was listed for the first time in the Minutes of the New Jersey Conference at Paterson in 1848. Linked with the Methodist Episcopal Church of Woodbridge, it was a part of what was then the Rahway District. Two ministers were assigned, H. Trumbower and W. Jeffery.

The church deed names the first trustees: Charles Toms, John Badgely, Joseph Toms, Daniel Wood, and Thomas Payne. Tombstones in the surrounding cemetery still bear the names of these old families.

The few families of Methodists that had settled in the area attended services in Woodbridge until regular preachers were assigned in 1847. In 1848, ground was broken and a frame church was erected at a cost of about \$2,700. At that time, there was a membership of eighteen.

In 1850 the church became a separate entity with J. R. Adams as pastor. By 1855, membership had increased to fifty-five, following the pastorates of R. S. Arndt, R. B. Lockwood, and Jeremiah Cowins, who served in that year. The Metuchen Methodist Church was united with that of New Dover until 1858.

## Falling Church Kills Atheist

An interesting tombstone not now extant, marked the last resting place of Thomas W. Harper, native of Bishopgate, London, England, in the Piscatawaytown Cemetery.

"He died June 23rd 1835, aged 62 years.

"His death was caused by the falling of the

"English Church, during the great storm

"Which occurred here in June 19th 1835.

"Tired with wandering through a world of sin.

"Hither we come to nature's common inn

"To rest our wearied bodies for a night,

"In hopes to rise in nature's truest light.

"The world's a city full of crooked streets.

"And deathe the market place where all must meet."

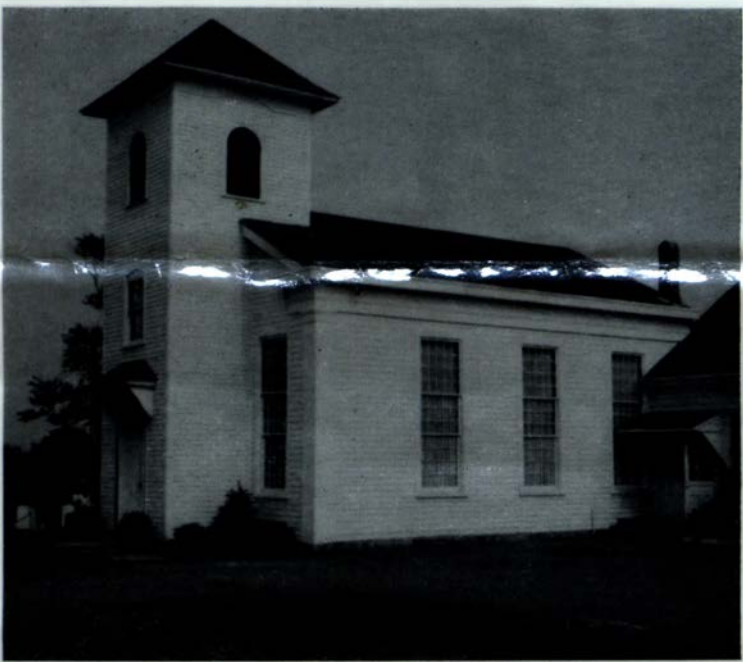
During a gale in September, 1938 a tree fell on this and other tombs. Harper's grave lay immediately across from the driveway of the present St. James Rectory and about forty feet in from the sidewalk.

John Stout, Sr., of Piscatawaytown, who died in 1929 stated that in his boyhood, "it was a common matter of conversation that this Englishman was one of a party who had foregathered in the Hopewell Inn, during the hurrican of 1835. Harper was a professed atheist, and used unguarded language of defiance to God. He walked out into the storm, and was struck by a timber from the church, never regaining consciousness."

This account is interesting in that even 50 years after the separation of the colonial church from the Church of England, it was still known as the "English Church."



VanBuskirk home on New Dover Road during 1920's. House is well over two hundred years old.



New Dover Methodist Episcopal Church. Steeple was lost during a storm.

## Skirmish at New Dover

Dumplingtown, as New Dover was known at one time, was the site of Revolutionary activity. Situated near the camp at Plainfield, the area was the scene of much activity by Revolutionary troops.

Relics of these days have been found in the form of shot being plowed up on the site of the old Wood farm off Wood Avenue, as well as cannon balls being taken from a well on the old Henderson farm.

An area of the Wood farm, somewhere near Wood Avenue, is the last resting place of some of Washington's troops, who died of wounds and illness while being transported to the Revolutionary hospital in Menlo Park.

## North Edison Had Two Stations

Oak Tree and Potter's Crossing were two station stops on the Lehigh Valley Railroad until recent years. While the mainline still runs through the area, both stations have since disappeared.

The Middlesex and Somerset Transportation Company, in August, 1903, shut out the Raritan Traction Company from Plainfield to Metuchen. The line, which passed through Oak Tree, had the only good right-of-way, through the area. It ran from Arlington Avenue, two miles south to Oak Tree. From that point, the trolley's ran over the M & S line. Fare to Oak Tree was five cents.

## Now It's New Jersey

The Dutch government capitulated to the English on August 29, 1664, and the area formerly known as New Netherland came into possession of James, Duke of York and Albany. He conveyed the land between the Hudson and Delaware rivers to John Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, as proprietors.

When granted to Berkeley and Carteret, what had been a part of New Netherland became known as *Nova Caesarea*, or New Jersey, from the island home of Sir George Carteret. The name "New Jersey" stuck, since the settlers seldom used the official "*Nova Caesarea*."

The concessions and agreements of the Lords Proprietors of New Jersey were signed on February 10, 1665, and Captain Philip Carteret, a distant relative of Sir George was commissioned as governor. Robert Vanquelin (*Sieur des Prairies*) of the city of Caen, France was appointed Surveyor-General.

## What's in a Name?

Oak Tree derives its name from an old oak tree that stood for centuries at the junction of the Oak Tree road and the road to Unionville. This ancient tree was a landmark and is mentioned in many of the old deeds and wills describing land in the vicinity.

Formerly known as the "Oak Tree Neighborhood," this district extended in the early days as far as "Swamptown," later known as "Brooksville," and then to the "Dog Tavern." Pumptown was included in its boundaries.

The area, still largely rural, was known in past days for its fine farms, and as a good location for settlers. One of the earliest farms in the area was that of the Randolphs, one of the first families to have settled in the Piscatawaytown area, and which had moved inland from the river.

Indians dwelling in the region were, according to tradition, the last and lived at Oak Tree, maintaining the finest relations with white settlers.

## British Move on Strategic Bonhamtown

Bonhamtown, on the turnpike which ran from Perth Amboy and Elizabethtown to New Brunswick was an important post for both British and American forces during the Revolutionary War. The proximity of high land for observation posts led General George Washington to suggest the use of Carman's Hill for checking on British shipping. Most of the records reflecting the use of Bonhamtown have been lost through the years. However, the *Writings of Washington*, contain some record of Bonhamtown's brief claim to national importance.

Writing to Governor William Livingston on December 1, 1776, Washington advised that British advance parties "were last night at Bonum Town, four Miles on this side of Woodbridge; They are impressing Waggons and Horses, and Collecting Cattle and Sheep; which is further proof of their intent to march a Considerable distance."

On the same day, again from his Brunswick headquarters, Washington wrote to the President of Congress. He advised that official of the presence of British forces in Bonhamtown and that their strength was in the neighborhood of "between Six and seven thousand strong." What had happened was the arrival of considerable reinforcements from Staten Island, which remained a British base throughout the war.

What American units were stationed in Bonhamtown, other than local militia? General Washington tells us, through a letter to Governor Livingston, on March 3, 1777, that "Capt. Thurston of the 3 Volunteer Companies from Virginia and some Maryland Militia had an Engagement near Piscataway, on the 1st Instant; the Effect has not yet reached me; the Captain was much wounded in the Arm. 3 of his Party were killed and 7 wounded."

On March 31, 1777, Washington's General Orders from his Morristown headquarters, advise us that a General Court Martial was held at Woodbridge on March 28th. The trial was that of a Captain William Work, of the 12th Pennsylvania Regt. accused of 'Misbehaviour and Cowardice, in an Action with the Enemy, on Carman's hill, near Bonum-Town. on the 8th Instant.' Work was found guilty, cashiered and dismissed from the service, "as a person unfit for a military Command." Another order, dated May 16, 1779, directed relief of the Bonhamtown Picket from the Pennsylvania Line.

Another of the future president's letters from headquarters at Fredericksburg, Virginia on October 17, 1777, suggests that a naval officer was slated for duty at Bonhamtown to observe the comings and goings of British shipping out of New York.

The letter suggesting this was written to New Jersey's "Lord" Stirling, of Basking Ridge. Washington was concerned of the possibility of "a very considerable embarkation" from New York.

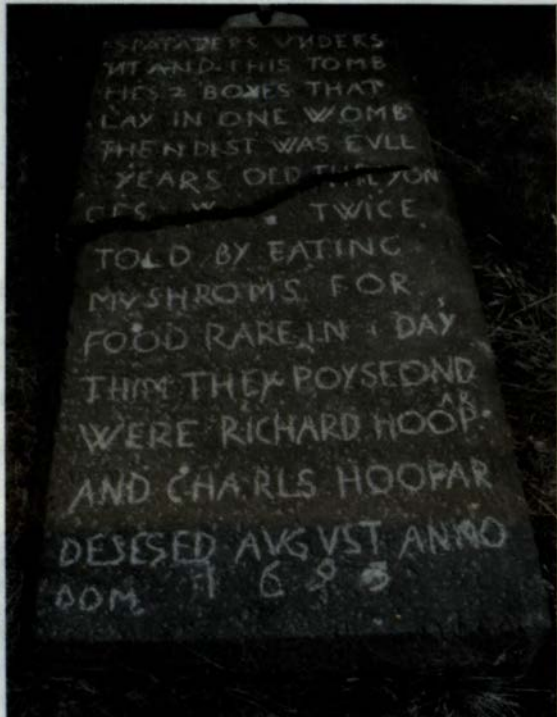
He felt that it was "of the utmost importance that we should ascertain the numbers as

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## Hooper Stone Historic Treasure

The Hooper gravestone, pictured to the left, is an historic treasure equal to any found in other colonial areas of the United States. It gives the history of the untimely death of two boys. Much of the stone is not legible today, due to the ravages of the elements.

Disobedience seems to have been at the root of the trouble—the boys persisted in eating "mushrooms" even after being warned not to. Undoubtedly the "mushrooms" were really toadstools.





## British Move

continued from page 6

near as possible, their destination the time of their sailing and above all how they are convoyed as to numbers and force of ships of War." To do this, it would be necessary to select a site on high ground which would permit the observer to see the ships as they passed Sandy Hook. "If an Officer acquainted with marine Affairs was stationed at Bonum Town and could give intelligence of the time of fleets sailing; endeavouring to distinguish the men of war from the transports."

General Orders, issued by Headquarters, Continental Army, dated December 22, 1778, give us an idea of the strength of the permanent garrison at Bonhamtown. "A Captain, two Subs, three Serjeants, a Drum and Fife and Fifty Rank and File to be sent to Bonam Town as an advanced Picket to be reliev'd every Monday 'till further orders. The Officer commanding it will receive his instructions from the Adjutant General."

Duty in Bonhamtown was not for those wishing to escape combat. In addition to the skirmish of March 1, 1777, Washington reported action on April 18, May 12, May 26, 1777, and on February 10, 1779. Other sources indicated that action in the neighborhood of this post was constantly a possibility.

On April 18, 1777, the General reported to the President of Congress that there was nothing to report in the military line, "except the Surprising a Small picquet guard of the Enemy, on Monday night at Bonam Town and bringing off Thirteen prisoners by One of our Parties." Another movement was made against Amboy at the same time, but was not successful.

Reports received by Washington from his field commanders often conflicted, and those describing activities in the area of Bonhamtown and Piscataway were no exceptions. Addressing himself to a Major General Adam Stephen from Morristown, the commander-in-chief called attention to the fact that while Stephen's "account of the attempt upon the Enemy at Piscataway is favourable, . . . I am sorry to add, widely different from those I have had from others, (Officers of distinction) who were of the party." It appears that Stephen had reported that the British had left half their dead on the field, and that the Americans had withdrawn in an orderly retreat when the fight went against them. Washington's conclusions, founded on the reports of other observers, were that the British did not leave their dead on the field and, "that instead of an orderly retreat, it was (with the greatest part of the detachment) a disorderly route, and, that the disadvantage was on our side, not the Enemy's, who had notice of your coming and was prepared for it." Stephen answered this letter of May 12, 1777 two days later. He insisted on the truth of his former report, claiming that his troops were forced to retire for lack of support from those who deliberately held off half a mile away. The Major General insisted as well that the reports disagreeing with his version had

come from the very officers who had failed to support him.

Washington reported this skirmish to the President of Congress on the same day he wrote Stephens. "On Saturday a Smart Skirmish happened with a detachment of our Troops, who attacked a Number of the Enemy near Piscataway, in which our men behaved well and obliged the Enemy to give way twice, as reported to me, with loss; The Enemy receiving a strong Reinforcement, our People retreated to their Post. I cannot give the particulars, as they have not been sufficiently ascertained."

By May 26, 1777, the British had withdrawn from Bonhamtown and Piscataway, and marched into New Brunswick. Washington, in his Morristown headquarters felt that this was a defensive move.

Two years later, on February 10, 1779, Washington reported the "Surprisal of the guard from Bonham Town. A disgrace of this kind can never happen to an Officer who is attentive to his duty and takes common precautions. I desire therefore that Lieutt. Pierson, who had command of the guard, may be immediately put under arrest, and ordered to Camp if he was detached from hence or to the quarters of the Jersey Bridge, if he belongs to those troops that he may take his trial." From the few accounts we have of the actions involving the Bonhamtown detachment, it does not appear to have been too alert to surprise! Lieutenant Pierson's fate has not come to light.

An intelligence report mentioned by Washington on February 15, 1779, indicated that information was being collected by a Captain Stokes. Stokes had advised Washington that the "enemy on Staten Island appear to be in motion, and have been collecting boats both at New York and the Island." This intelligence was passed on to Brigadier General William Maxwell, who was advised by Washington to "redouble your vigilance and be ready to oppose any attempt they may make near you." Maxwell was also advised to remove "a considerable number of fat cattle" from between Woodbridge and the blazing star. He told Maxwell that "I have desired Capt. Stokes to assist you in the business and to communicate to you any further discoveries he may make."

The French Alliance, which brought France into the Revolutionary War on the American side brought special orders for the Bonhamtown garrison. The treaty with France, naturally, brought a spirit of festivity to the Continentals, then located at Pluckemin. A celebration was planned for February 18, 1779 and Washington "directed the officer commanding at Bonum Town to be particularly vigilant and to transmit" to Colonel Abraham Buford "the earliest intelligence, shd any movement happen." Washington's orders were passed on to Captain Stokes, who was commander at Bonhamtown, by Alexander Hamilton. He was enjoined to exercise extra vigilance on the Thursday in question, both that night and part of the next day.

Washington was taking no chances of a possible surprise attack during the celebration.

## Area Residents on Revolutionary Committees

Since this area was a part of Woodbridge and Piscataway townships during the War for Independence, residents serving on committees working for independence were listed under those of the townships in which they lived. Two members of the Woodbridge Committee of Observation lived in what is now Edison Township — William Smith and Ebenezer Foster. Jacob Titsworth and John Dunn were listed as members of the Piscataway Township Committee of Observation.

The same four men have been identified as having made up the Committee of Correspondence in what was to become Raritan Township.

William Smith and James Dunn were listed as members of the Provincial Congress from this area.

There may have been others, however, the overlapping of names between Woodbridge and Piscataway townships presents a problem in identification.

A Thompson Stelle was appointed Commissioner for Middlesex County to dispose of confiscated property. He was probably captured by the British for on June 27, 1777, William Manning replaced him.

Committees of Observation and Correspondence were established throughout the colonies to keep tabs on plans and activities of the royal government, and to keep each other informed of what was being planned that might hinder colonial moves for more self-government.

## First Election As Township 1870

The first municipal election in Edison Township (then Raritan Township) was held on April 16, 1870 in the old Metuchen Academy. Up to this time, the government of the area was that of either Woodbridge and Piscataway.

Luther H. Tappan became the township assessor, Charles C. Campbell, the collector. John T. Martin was selected as township clerk, and Israel Thornall, overseer of the poor. Chosen freeholders were Michael M. Lupardus. The township committee consisted of Manning Freeman, W. E. Crowell, Augustus Blackford, Theodore A. Wood and Augustus Stelle (whose home is pictured at the top of page 1).

## Mainline Railroad Arrived In 1835

When the first steam train passed through what is now Edison Township on January 2, 1836, on its way to New Brunswick, it signaled the beginning of an active railroading career for the Edison-Metuchen area.

Tracks on the New Jersey Railroad were completed between Jersey City and New Brunswick in 1835. The first train, drawn by a new locomotive, *New Brunswick*, pulling thirteen cars decorated with banners bearing the name of counties, cities and villages along the line, came down from Newark at the high speed of fifteen miles an hour.

Passengers had to transfer across the Raritan River bridge in stages at a charge of 6½ cents each. A railroad bridge was built across the river and opened for service on January 1, 1838. This line became what is today the high-speed electrified main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The next railroad to run through the township was the Lehigh Valley, chartered on March 11, 1858. Chartered as the Perth Amboy and Bound Brook Railroad Company, construction was delayed until after April 2, 1872, when the PA&BB RR Co. was consolidated with the Bound Brook & Easton, becoming the Easton & Amboy Railroad.

At one time the Reading Company had planned to run through service from Central Avenue, Metuchen to New York, with three trains daily. This idea never materialized, and service to New York was limited to the Lehigh Valley and Pennsylvania.

While the Reading Railroad never organized through service to New York, it has passed through this area since 1892. Construction began a year earlier, with traffic beginning in September, 1892. The Woodbridge Branch was opened in July, 1900.

This was primarily a freight line, but there are indications that passenger trains were operated at various times.

An interesting industrial line was that constructed to serve the clay pits that were located in what is now Raritan Arsenal. Surveyed in 1880, what was known as the "Raritan Ridge" railroad was constructed over a right of way filled in with sand, gravel, and strippings from the clay banks. A light locomotive and horses were used for motive power. As the tracks kept

sinking, Charles Bloomfield, the owner, had to keep filling in the right of way.

When the arsenal was constructed during World War I, this railroad became the "Arsenal Road," and was connected with the gravel railroad at Bonhamtown. It was also extended onto the salt marshes, and began hauling heavy freight with large motive power. In 1918, new rails were laid, but in two years these were as crooked as snakes. This resulted in army truck, fitted with heavy flanged wheels taking the place of heavy locomotives. The tracks were ripped up in 1936, as a connection had been established at the arsenal between the Pennsylvania and Lehigh Valley railroads.

In 1859, the New Jersey Railroad bought a tract of land at Bonhamtown, containing a deposit of yellow gravel. The railroad built a branch line from the main line at Amboy Avenue in Metuchen, to the gravel pit, a distance of three miles.

The single track gravel line was used for years as a siding for long freight trains which pulled in to clear the line for more important passenger trains. This is now the Bonhamtown Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

A lease was signed on June 30, 1871, taking effect the next day, whereby the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Company, the Camden & Amboy Railroad, and the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company, known as the United Companies, was leased to the Pennsylvania for a period of 999 years.

Since then, there have been few striking changes on the system. As time went on, trains grew longer, faster, and more powerful, with a through line from New York to Chicago, and to Washington, D. C. and St. Louis.

## Area Had Heavy Civil War Loss

The company of the 28th Regiment, N. J. Volunteers, made up of men from this section almost wiped out in the Battle of Fredricksburg, December 11-15, 1862. Found dead on the battlefield were Harry Brantingham, George Boice, Peter F. Runyon, Joel F. Langstaff, Martin V. McCray, William M. Merrell, Jeremiah R. Field, Augustine Ryno, Charles W. Toubet, Clarence D. Green, Aaron H. Lane, and Samuel Baker.

The Union forces under Burnside lost more than 1,000 men out of a total of 12,653.

## Menlo Park

continued from page 5  
considering that he often worked 100 hours a week.

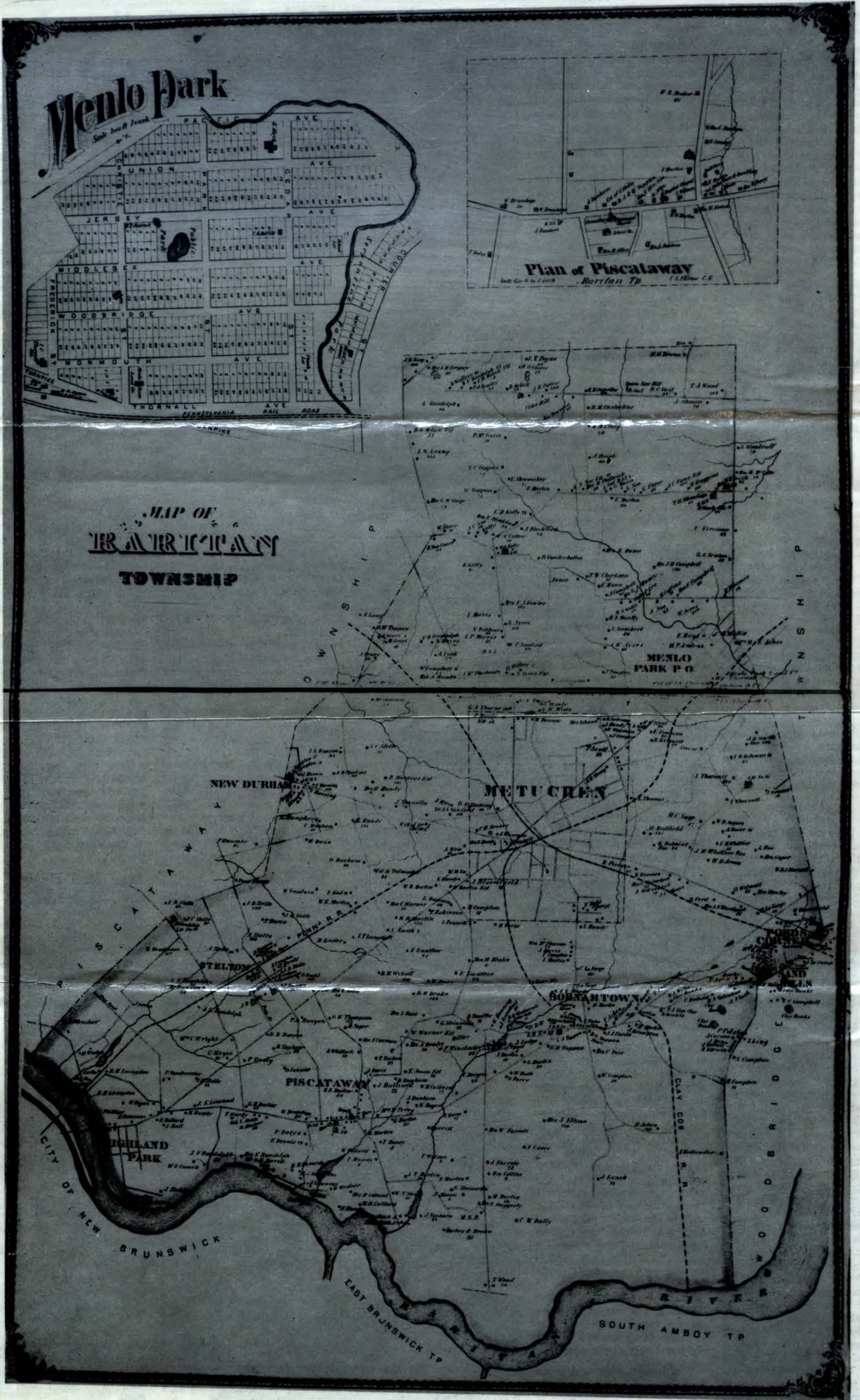
Through this dedication, not only to himself, and his inventions, but also to the people of the world, you can see why Edison is and should be called the "Genius of Invention." Had it not been for Edison, the progress of this century would have been kept at a slower pace.

At the time of his death, he was still attempting to find even better filaments for the incandescent bulb he had first invented more than fifty years before, where it all began — at Menlo Park.



Interior of the Mt. Pleasant School, circa 1890. Can anyone identify those in the picture?





MAP OF RARITAN (NOW EDISON) TOWNSHIP  
CIRCA 1875